

Prepositions in relative clauses

Reminder → J1–J5

A In formal styles **noun + of which** is often preferred to –☆ **whose + noun:**

- A huge amount of oil was spilled, *the effects of which* are still being felt. (*or ... whose effects are still being felt.*)

☆ **that / which ... of** in relative clauses:

- The school **of which** she is head is closing. (*less formally* The school **(that / which)** she is head **of** is closing.)

After **both** we can use **of which** and **of whose**, but not usually **which** or **whose**:

- Lotta was able to switch between German and Russian, **both of which** she spoke fluently. (*not ... both which she spoke fluently.*)

Also after: all, each, many, most, neither, none, part, some, a number (one, two, etc.; the first, the second, etc.; half, a third, etc.), and superlatives (the best, the biggest, etc.)

B In formal, mainly written, English **whose** can come after a preposition in a relative clause. Putting the preposition at the end of the clause is more natural in informal and spoken English:

- I now turn to Freud, **from whose** work the following quotation is taken. (*less formally ... Freud, whose work the following quotation is taken from.*)

C When a preposition is needed with the relative pronouns **which** and **whom** we usually put it before the relative pronoun in formal styles:

- The rate **at which** a material heats up depends on its chemical composition.
 There are 80 teachers in the Physics Department, **among whom** are 24 professors.

After a preposition we usually use **whom** rather than **who** in formal styles:

- Is it right that politicians should make important decisions without consulting the public **to whom** they are accountable? (*rather than ... the public to who they are accountable.*)

and we don't use **that** or **no relative pronoun**:

- The valley **in which** the town lies is heavily polluted. (*not* The valley in that the town lies is heavily polluted.; *not* The valley in the town lies is heavily polluted.)

In less formal English we usually put the preposition later in the relative clause:

- The office **that** Juan took us **to** was filled with books. (*rather than* The office **to which** Juan took us ...)

and we prefer **who** (or **that**) rather than **whom** (see also Unit 26A):

- The playground wasn't used by the children **who** it was built **for**.

D If the verb in the relative clause is a two-word verb (e.g. **come across**, **fill in**, **look after**, **take on**) we don't usually put the preposition before the relative pronoun:

- The Roman coins, **which** a local farmer **came across** in a field, are now on display in the National Museum. (*not ... coins, across which the local farmer came, are ...*)

With three-word verbs, we only put the preposition before the relative pronoun in a very formal or literary style, and many people avoid this pattern:

- She is one of the few people **to whom** I **look up**. (*or less formally ... who I look up to.*)

Exercises

55.1 Rewrite these sentences so that they are more appropriate for formal written English. Use **preposition + which** or **preposition + whose**, as appropriate. **A & B**

- Fleming's discovery of penicillin, which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for, had a major influence on the lives of people in the 20th century. *Fleming's discovery of penicillin, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize, had a major influence on the lives of people in the 20th century.*
- He was the uncle of Anne Boleyn, whose execution in 1536 he lost power after.
- It is her unmarried name which she is better known by.
- Mr Wang, whose land the road will be built across, is unhappy about the plans.
- The election result, which there can be no doubt about, is a great disappointment.
- The building which Marcus emerged from was little more than a ruin.
- It is a medieval palace, whose tower the king hid in during the civil war.
- I am grateful to Aarav Basu, whose book on the history of the bicycle this information comes from.

55.2 Complete the sentences using the endings from the box and **which** or **whom** after an appropriate preposition. **C**

the furniture is to be delivered. she was divorced in 2005. he had shown his novel.
~~I had great respect.~~ it was named. the printer was supplied.
 most world trade was conducted. you should be aware.

- My Maths teacher, Mr Kato, was someone *for whom I had great respect.*
- Until 1914 the pound sterling was the currency
- They have changed the date
- Pasteurisation was discovered by the French chemist Louis Pasteur,
- He was persuaded to stay in England by Charles Dickens,
- There are a number of safety procedures
- Details are in the instruction manual
- Ms Park was left the money by her former husband,

55.3 Rewrite the sentences from 55.2 in a less formal way, putting the preposition at the end of the relative clause. **A**

- My Maths teacher, Mr Kato, was someone who / that / - I had great respect for.*

55.4 If necessary, suggest corrections or improvements to these sentences or write ✓ if they are already correct. **A, C & D**

- The house into which the thieves broke is owned by Caleb Cruz.
- The school has been given 20 laptops, half of which are brand new.
- JKL Motorbikes sells six different models, the first which they started making in 1985.
- The party, to which I've been looking forward all week, is at Maxine's house.
- The water that she fell into was freezing cold.
- I have heard her on the violin and clarinet, both which she plays extremely well.
- The film was made at Tulloch Castle, part which dates back to 1466.
- The college is home to 30 students from Nepal, almost all of who are studying economics.